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THE
AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND JUSTIFICATION
OF
JOHANNES RONGE.

THE
AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND JUSTIFICATION
OF
JOHANNES RONGE,

(THE GERMAN REFORMER.)



Translated from the Fifth German Edition,

BY

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THE following translation is not, in all cases, literal, but as much so as the rhetorical style of Ronge will admit, if the spirit of his sentences is to be retained. It was made in Dresden, and revised by a gentleman who well understands the English language. A few unimportant letters and paragraphs are omitted, but no alterations have been made. There are, however, some things in the book which will, probably, fail to interest the English reader, which are inserted out of justice to Ronge, in order that his vindication from the unjust charges of the Roman priests may be seen in all its force; that no stain on the moral character of a religious reformer should rest, if undeserved. His vindication is triumphant, and substantiated by all the proofs we could reasonably desire.

Other translations have appeared of the Treves letter, and of various parts of his defence. Mr. *Laing* has written a long book, on the movement

of which Ronge is the most distinguished leader. In that book, one can read the creed of the new reformer, so far as it has been given to the world. But I never could make out, in Germany, what Ronge really did believe, except those general truths to which every modern sect would assent. It might be doing injustice to Ronge and his followers if I should advance my own conjectures. We have yet to wait for new developments before we can definitely know anything satisfactory. One thing is true, his warmest admirers are found in the rationalistic ranks. Few religious men, of any school or party, look upon the movement as anything else than a sincere effort to shake off the fetters of papal power: as such, they wish it well. Their sympathy is cordial and decided. Nearly all Protestants hail it with joy, whatever may be the doctrinal opinions of its leaders, because they see in it an effort of the human mind to achieve its freedom; and, whatever doubts are expressed as to the capacity, or piety, or judgment of its leaders, they expect that good will come out of it.

About Ronge himself, there is every variety of opinion. Some, of great discernment, deem him inadequate to his task. More still laugh at the *idea of comparing* him with Luther, either in

genius, learning, or power, and especially in the lofty, spiritual motives which should animate a religious reformer; yet they all admit that Ronge is bold, magnanimous, high-minded, independent, amiable, eloquent, and, in his way, religious. His eloquence is popular, and his great power consists in understanding the prejudices and passions of his countrymen, and, still more, in knowing how to excite them. But he is truly a patriot, and a lover of liberty, highly venerated by the people, and deserving, on the whole, of more esteem than he receives from the upper classes.

But the government is not friendly to the movement with which he is now identified. Nor will it be to any reform, whatever, that springs from the people. It loves not, any more than absolute and military monarchies, have ever loved, democratic or liberal movements, when these are based on the agitation of abstract ideas. It, of course, stigmatizes the movement, calls it infidel and revolutionary, says that it is allied with communism—and that it has only a political bearing.

It remains to be seen whether reproach or persecution can arrest the spread of ideas and truth, those indestructible and omnipotent agencies in *all the changes* of society, and in all human pro-

gress. The future is veiled from our eyes. But what says the voice of the past? History declares all attempts to suppress the insurrection of human intelligence to be in vain.

As the "New Reformation" is an *onward* movement, one cannot but wish it well. And when I express my hopes that it will be for good, and rejoice in the labours of Ronge to break a degrading, spiritual despotism, I still should be sorry to be understood as agreeing with all his theological opinions. But then the world will never probably attach much importance to his views. He is a fashion, and will pass away. He does not create circumstances, but circumstances have created him. He may help to rouse his countrymen to the sense of existing evils, and therefore will merit their gratitude. But he is not one of those geniuses who now and then are sent into the world, to propagate new principles, and to found new schools of thought. The German Catholic reformers, with Ronge at their head, are attempting nothing new, they are employed in the work of demolition. But it is the *positive* and not the *negative* which is permanent, and which alone saves the nations.

London, December, 1845.

PREFACE.

IN the defence which I now offer to the public, I detail the events which led to my excommunication and removal from office, and have only to ask of my brethren and fellow-citizens their impartial judgment. In no respect, have I the desire or intention to justify myself before those who call themselves Catholic Christians and teachers, but who are known to be hypocrites, and who make use of religion only as a means to extort money or secure power and place. I consider it would be a degradation to attempt to justify myself before them. I seek to vindicate myself only before those who are Christians in spirit, and who are sincerely striving for light and truth — for moral liberty and Christian love.

Such will see that I have fought for a righteous cause, and they will give me their confidence and co-operation. With their aid, we will cheerfully engage in the great and delightful work to which we are urged by our conscience, and our calling, even that of promoting the temporal and spiritual welfare of our fellow-men.

THE AUTHOR.

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THE
AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND JUSTIFICATION
OF
JOHANNES RONGE.

CHILDHOOD—SCHOOL—UNIVERSITY.

I WAS born on the 16th of November, 1813, at Bischofswalde, a village in the Neisse department, near the Suden mountains. I am the third child of my parents, who owned a small farm in Bischofswalde. Beside myself, there were also ten others, of whom two died young. We were, at an early age, put to labour; and, while my eldest brother assisted my father in the field, I, as the second son, tended his small flock of sheep. And this was my chief occupation from six to twelve years of age, during the spring, summer, and *autumn*. In winter, I was also employed in other

necessary work. My father was earnest, fearless, of a sound mind, and without superstition. He died in March, 1842. My mother devoted herself wholly to the family, and died, October, 1831.

I received the first rudiments of education at the village school. Instruction was confined, in the upper classes, to reading, writing, arithmetic, sacred history, and committing the church catechism to memory. It was not until the last year at school, that geography and Silesian history were taught. In my solitary life, as a shepherd (for I learned sacred history and the catechism in the fields, beside the flock), I often thought on serious subjects, — on time and eternity; and thoughts on these, at times, filled me with sadness.

One of my teachers persuaded my father to send me to the gymnasium, which he would not have done, on account of his large family, had it not been for the teacher's persuasions. I went to the gymnasium at Neisse, in the year 1827, and remained until 1836. I took not much interest in the ancient languages, and loved neither Horace nor most of the other Roman authors. But I had the greatest passion for German literature, and especially history. Rotteck filled me *with enthusiasm*.

With feelings of intense delight, I entered the University of Breslau. I felt, and I knew that I was free; nor did I abuse my time and liberty by idleness and dissipation. Intimate with a circle of noble young men, we zealously endeavoured both to cultivate the mind and strengthen the body. For a profession, I made choice of theology, because, feeling an inclination for teaching and instructing, I thought the ecclesiastical profession peculiarly adapted to me. Though I then despised the forms and formulæ with which it was encumbered, I did not know, as I do now, the system of compulsion and hypocrisy which is maintained by the Roman hierarchy. Many of my friends, fearing that my spiritual liberty would be endangered, endeavoured to dissuade me from choosing the ecclesiastical profession. But I flattered myself that I had sufficient strength to encounter the dangers, and successfully to pursue my labours. The assistance which my father rendered me, united with a small stipend, was sufficient for my support, and he left me free to choose my profession. But, as I saw that my father was oppressed by the cares of his large family, and as I did not wish to take anything from the small *patrimony* of my brothers and sisters, I deemed

it my duty, as soon as possible, to make myself independent. And this, I blush not to say, was the worldly reason which induced me to become a catholic priest. And how many priests are there, I would ask, who have not been influenced by similar reasons? During the time that I was in the University, from 1837 to 1838, I also performed my military service, under the Major Von Fritts, at Breslau.

THE SEMINARY.

In December, 1839, I entered the Seminary. Then commenced my bitterest days and my severest conflicts. The confidence which I had thus far felt for my spiritual teachers was destroyed when I saw them in close proximity, and when I perceived how religion was perverted in order to oppress and subjugate the people. Yea, when I saw what a frightful web of hypocrisy Rome sought to entangle them in from the cradle to the grave,—when I saw how the *holiest things* were treated with scorn, and all

dignity of mind suppressed, I was filled with the deepest amazement and indignation. I felt myself, for the first time, galled with disgraceful fetters, and also perceived the sufferings of my companions, which were the more bitter, inasmuch as they dared not tell the causes of their sorrow. The Roman hierarchy knows very well how to bind all Christians of the Catholic faith with bonds which they cannot break ;—it knows more wonderfully than Moses did, how to bring water from the dry rock—even money from an impoverished people. But its greatest art is seen in the highest perfection in the education of the inferior clergy. It has bound them so securely with spiritual and worldly ties, that it is next to impossible to escape from them. The great workshop where these fetters are now forged is the theological seminary. Here the young man receives indelibly the stamp of bondage. Here is he, who would devote himself to the elevation of the people, trained to consecrated idleness. Here is his spirit, excited by fears and religious ordinances, forced to a blind obedience. Here is his mind trained to hypocrisy, and his heart to a cold selfishness. In short, here is the whole man—body and soul, degraded to the condition of a slave, and a tool, without the power

of will. The spiritual torments of these victims are dreadful, and their better nature indeed revolts, as the most sacred rights and most valuable gifts which God has bestowed are robbed from them. Yet quiet is the slave, and the more quiet the deeper the grave in which his freedom and dignity are buried. Sometimes, indeed, his desperate groans force themselves out from his inmost soul, but these soon are exchanged for the hallelujahs of the hypocrite.

Oh ! all my fibres tremble when I think on the insults we endured, and on the disgraceful treatment we received ; and I only wish that my pen was a flaming torch, which could illuminate that dark and deep abyss, in which, even amid songs of praise, all the better feelings were suppressed, and the mind itself subdued. But I will confine myself to a simple statement of what I have seen and what I have suffered, and I am persuaded that most of my fellow-citizens—those who are as yet ignorant of the fearful nets which Rome draws around its victims—cannot suppress their feelings of indignation, astonishment, and disgust.

MY FIRST DAYS IN THE SEMINARY.

On the very first day after I entered the seminary, I perceived on the countenances of most of my companions, according to their peculiar condition, perplexity, fear, and profound melancholy, which, at best, were only relieved by a sort of desponding resignation. Six of my companions occupied with me the same cell, and, in the first evening, not a single word was spoken by one of them. All six were so miserable, or so disturbed, that no noise escaped them as they sunk to sleep. Forty young men, in the vigour and strength of their days, glided about like so many mutes. In gloomy silence each gazed upon the other, and the friend scrutinized the face of his friend as if he would look into his heart. They sought that heroism which at once sacrifices the happiness of youth, liberty, all worldly hopes and desires, in order, as we were taught, the better to promote the temporal and eternal welfare of our fellow-creatures, as if one could elevate mankind to independence and dignity while he himself was without the same. But what alarmed and sickened me the most was, the spi-

ritual torpor which universally prevailed, produced, on the one hand, by oppression; and, on the other, by dejectedness. The young man of twenty-four had relinquished, for ever, the world, and had severed the dearest ties which bound him to society. In order to secure future happiness, he had extinguished the generous spirit of youth, while egotism poisoned his warm blood with the venom of mistrust, selfishness, and envy. In the seminary, it seemed to me as if a veil was drawn over our heads for ever, as if, in eternal night, ghosts were singing our funeral dirge. The Romish hierarchy seemed to glare at me like a hideous monster, seemed to be digging the grave in which my own youth was to be buried, and into which the freedom and prosperity of the people were to be for ever committed. The young man, who would become a teacher of the people, sees everything like manliness destroyed, for he must submit to disgraceful bondage in an institution whose first commandment is unconditional obedience. He sees that the constitution and ordinances of the hierarchy are not designed to elevate, but depress his nation. He sees that he himself is nothing but *the minister* of a foreign power, and moreover *must, as such*, help to impose the yoke. Further-

more, he sees that he must bear the infamy which this despotism imposes on his countrymen, and share the disgrace which is spread throughout the land, in consequence of the vices of so many celibataries.

Will the money which is taken from starving poverty and pious superstition—will savoury viands and sparkling wines be to him a compensation? Yes, were he a voracious beast rather than a human being. The brute is contented with its prey, but not man—nothing satisfies *his* desires.

But, in this fearful hour, what can sustain the mind? With me, from the first, it was the hope of breaking the chains of my nation. It was this which animated me. But will not the soul—will not the mind sink under the bondage? Will not all moral energy be destroyed? Alas, how seldom does one rise above oppression! When he has once stooped to be a hypocrite, will he not become the object of contempt both to himself and the world? All these things pressed themselves at the first, upon my mind, and filled me with indescribable misery. They were realities to me, and they will be realities to others. Moreover, the time was uselessly consumed by ceremonies, and by reciting the Latin service

from five to six hours in a day, with the addition of the breviary. The time employed in these exercises was as follows :—

From	5½ o'clock, A. M.	to	6	—Morning Prayers.
„	6	„	7	—Breviary.
„	7	„	7½	—Mass.
„	7½	„	8	—Breakfast.
„	8	„	10	—Lectures.
„	10	„	10¾	—Free.
„	10¾	„	11½	—Study.
„	11½	„	12	—Breviary.
„	12 P. M.	„	12½	—Prayer in chapel.
„	12½	„	1¾	—Dinner.
„	1¾	„	2	—Prayer in chapel.
„	2	„	4	—Lectures.
„	4	„	4¾	—Free.
„	4¾	„	7	—Study.

After supper, half an hour prayer in the chapel, and an hour devoted to the breviary. The prayers were in Latin, and always the same. On Sundays and Fridays there were still more. Each priest is obliged to repeat the whole breviary daily. During meals nothing was allowed to be spoken, and in other respects the *treatment* was most humiliating. There were *only two study rooms* for forty persons. The

sleeping rooms were without stoves, and made to accommodate from three to fifteen. The largest was called the *menagerie*.

Thus were five hours in the day consumed in Latin prayers, and three of which were given to the breviary when they ought to have been devoted to study.

It is only with a shudder that I think on those old days of slavery, when my moral energy was enfeebled, and when hypocrisy and idleness were left to exert their influence. My situation often bordered on despair. In burning passion my spirit struggled in the night. Is it possible, thought I, to dash aside the bitter cup? No, I must drink it. And yet something cheered me, and promised me, in dreams, a day of deliverance. Sick at heart, and depressed in spirits, I left the seminary in 1840.

Oh! I implore you, German fathers and mothers, allow not your sons to be buried in this grave of moral freedom. You incur a greater sin than were you to take away the lives of your children, inasmuch as moral death is more melancholy than bodily death. The German mothers, in ancient times, destroyed their children, sooner than permit them to be *slaves to the Romans*. But now it is considered

an honour when a German youth becomes the slave of the Roman bishop. It is true he is unconscious of the yoke, because it is borne in the name of religion. Still it is not the less a degrading servitude. Oh, ye young men, who choose the sacred and noble profession of being the instructors of the people, I conjure you also to shake off your fetters, and choose a hard couch and a life of trouble, rather than indulge in the disgraceful idleness of an ignominious life.



MY DEPARTURE FROM THE SEMINARY.

The doors of the seminary, which no one dared open but twice a week, in order to see his friends,—the doors of this institution of torture, both for soul and body, were at length passed, and I saw once more the fair and beautiful world. As I passed these enchanted thresholds, and beheld the blue heavens, and the bright sun above me, I again breathed freely. And yet the heavens and the sun were not as they once were. *The earth seemed confined, too, and small, for my*

mind was not yet free,—my spirit was still in bonds—I hastened to my home. There, amid my native mountains, where I dreamed the visions of my youth, would I lighten the load of sorrow. The tender eyes of my sisters, said I to myself, there will surely cheer and warm my heart, which has become cold from the hypocritical and pharisaical gaze of haughty priests.

Indeed, the hearty welcome of my sisters, and the joy I felt in meeting them, dissipated, for a while, the sense of my servitude. But it soon returned stronger than before. I was awakened from the dream by a humiliating exhibition of the force of superstition. An old man known to me from childhood paid me a visit. When I reached forth my hand for the cordial and friendly shake, the old man would have kissed it! But shall old age thus bend to youth? Shall I, who by my profession am only a servant, become the instrument of humiliation to my fellow-creatures? Oh, Rome! you mingle poison with your holy oil. You would subvert the dignity of man. People gazed at me, strangely and slyly, as if I had become a superhuman being. And why? By the ordinance of the pope? Oh, no, surely my connection with Rome made me no superior being, *but rather a hypocrite and a slave.* At

last the time came for my ordination, and with many ceremonies and a heavy heart, I was led into the church decked out as a victim for sacrifice. Reflections on my father, and on my brothers and sisters, the prejudices of the Catholic world, which, for the most part, believes in the eternity of the Roman servitude (called church), depressed my spirits. And yet, as the chains were riveted on me, something animated my soul, and sustained me. It was the hope that my fetters would yet be broken. A few feeble rays of hope broke through the darkness and, apparently, eternal night of my prison. But when, and how?

I sought a situation. Both the pulpit and the school had charms for me. In these I hoped to be useful. My spirits improved. I went to Grottkau in 1841, to which place I had been sent.

MY OFFICE.

Resolutely determined to be a teacher of the people, in the strict sense of the word, though *not in the sense as understood by the hierarchy ;*

to speak the truth without respect of persons, and to be no hypocrite, I commenced my labours at Grottkau ; but, from inexperience in a new field of duties, a long time elapsed before I saw clearly my course, and was prepared for practical labour. But it was in the school, chiefly, that I was most at home, and the most successful. This seemed to me like a holy garden in which the mind of youth was developed, where their thoughts flashed forth like beautiful lightnings, and where the purest atmosphere was breathed. I always loved children ; and in the school, too, I was free from the espionage which existed when I preached, and which always depressed my spirits and crippled my words. I was free from the humiliating feelings which the confessional chair excited, when I was worshipped as an idol, and made a judge of the thoughts and consciences of my fellow-men. When oppressed by the yoke of the hierarchy, I fled to the school, and this retreat uniformly invigorated me. Little did those children know what good they did me. As far as in my power, I laboured against superstition and Phariseeism in the pulpit and in the confessional chair, as well as in the school. Still the results were small, in consequence of the *systematic and constant opposition which the*

hierarchy makes to all spiritual progress among the people.

Against this opposition, in view of this bondage of both soul and body, I perceived that what I planted and sowed would, sooner or later, be destroyed by the stifling atmosphere of superstition. The conviction of this became every day more insupportable, and the more insupportable as I saw additional evidence of the fearful despotism of Rome on the people, and the undoubted vices of my brethren. I perceived increasing danger to myself even, and felt it to be my imperative duty to declare at once against the bad practices and deadly dogmas of Rome, and die, if need be, the bodily, rather than the spiritual death.



MY MOTIVES IN RISING AGAINST THE RELIGIOUS DESPOTISM OF THE POPE.

I would now present the arguments which matured my resolution, and which, to carry into execution, seemed to be my duty. From these, *every one may form his own judgment.*

1. I oppose the Roman hierarchy, because it is unfavourable to all individual dignity, and would degrade men to the most humiliating slavery.

Who does not know that the dignity of man consists in his reason, in his will, and the free exercise of both, as essential to his moral freedom ?

Now, as a Roman Catholic priest, I have not the free exercise of my reason or of my will. I only dare to think, to read, and to write as the constitution of the hierarchy ordains, or as my superiors permit. If I think, or write, or read different from what these allow, I am forthwith declared an heretic, and a violater of the laws. I am compelled to worship God as the hierarchy ordains, and am taught to believe that no other worship is acceptable to Him. I have, as a Romish priest, neither freedom of thought nor of conscience. I have no right to oppose, in any respect, the will of my superiors, but must blindly obey. I have no independent existence, but am a mere machine—an involuntary agent in spreading the fog of superstition. But Christianity calls upon me to break this servitude, and seek a free existence. It demands a free, not involuntary virtue, and its true effect is to *produce individuality of character.*

But that every German may see and feel his duty, I will describe more minutely some of the pernicious influences which were exercised on me during my office as a priest, and this description will also reveal the condition of hundreds of my old associates.

I felt, in consequence of my seclusion in consecrated walls, a morbid and sickly irritability. Every thing like generous sympathy, manly courage, and impulse to activity became feebler every day; while, on the other hand, there arose gradually within me, to my great alarm, and in spite of my struggles, coldness, indifference, and even sentiments bordering on hatred. I felt towards my colleagues unaccountable mistrust. I avoided especially the friends of my youth, and those with whom I had spent the happiest years of my life at the university. I dared not expose to them the sufferings of my soul, and the loss of my liberty. But what humiliated me the most were the ceremonies of the altar, and especially since I knew that many of my parishioners were naturally inclined to superstition and the show of devotion. In the performance of these ceremonies was I not acting the hypocrite? Oh, how humbled I was in my own eyes as I knelt *before the altar*, while behind me were blindly

believing worshippers! Unspeakable anguish filled my soul that this humiliation must continue, that I was doomed to hopeless slavery, that my life was useless, and worse than useless, that I was robbed of all the best means of doing good, and robbed for ever. Before me I saw a course of unchanging hypocrisy, or an early grave. Should I surrender myself to these? Gradually courage animated me for the grand combat of life or death within my soul. I resolved to break my bonds—I would step beyond the narrow circle which confined me. I resolved to tear away the mask of one thousand years' hypocrisy—the consecrations and the crosses of the middle ages. And this resolution was strengthened by seeing the fate of my colleagues, many of whom suffered more than I. Some now have silently, and cheated of their life's labours, sunk into the grave. Who that has witnessed their sorrows, can suppress his indignation, if one drop of noble blood still remains in his veins? And yet these were accounted happy! Others, again, sought to drown the consciousness of their degradation, in eating and in drinking, while many sought absolutely to stultify themselves, and, like plants, to vegetate, *without volition, without thought, and with-*

out activity. There were some, however, of a fanatical turn, who adopted readily all the superstitions of the dark ages, and, with a zeal unworthy of our age, affected the austere sanctity and the holy tone of the ancient fathers of fanaticism.

At last, I sought to strengthen my resolution by inquiries of those who sought high position in the church. But I found among them but few really noble minds, of amiable temper, perhaps, but either tamely submissive to authority, or meanly avaricious of distinction.

But, secondly, I oppose the tyrannical domination of the Roman hierarchy, because it opposes the instruction of the people.

As a teacher of the people and of religion it behoves me to seek universal freedom, and to be faithful to the words, "We are all brethren, and children of one Father." It behoves me to seek the freedom of the people, because it is only the free man who can be virtuous. And it is my duty, not only to advance myself, spiritually, but also to carry the flag of civilization and humanity before my congregation. But I am not only hindered from doing these things, but I am *required to preach slavery rather than liberty,*

and promote darkness rather than light, and spiritual torpor instead of activity. In so doing, would I not justly draw upon myself the indignation of my contemporaries and the curses of posterity?

Thirdly, I attack the power of Rome, because it teaches a religion which is hostile to the happiness of mankind, and is opposed to the fundamental principles of primitive Christianity; because it has introduced customs and abuses at war with the spiritual and temporal elevation of the people; and because it seeks to sustain the dominion of a privileged priesthood. It would be superfluous to point out these things in a learned or extended treatise. The fruits of the Papal power have been known and seen for centuries, and any one will perceive them who will give himself the trouble to look. Is that a blessing which Rome bestows, that one part of the community, and no small part, should languish in the most oppressive poverty, while another part, including the high prelate, should revel in abundance? Can it be the effect of a holy church that a great part of society should be held in superstition and ignorance,—yes, degraded *almost to the condition of brutes*,—in order that

the consecrated servants of the Pope should be their lords and masters? Where is there the spirit of love which should exist in the Christian Church? What help comes from Rome to remove this degrading spiritual debasement among the people? Where does brotherly love show itself, and where does it work for the elevation of the people? Where is the true appreciation of the sacraments—where the humility, where the charity enjoined by the early preachers of Christianity? Does anything more than a mere form remain of all these realities? Have not the Romish priests degraded religion to a mere system of hypocrisy, in order to advance the wealth and power of the Pope? Is not the Roman Church a lying institution, propped up by the fears and superstitions of mankind? Hence, the disgust of the greater part of the thinking community for the clergy and their Church. Nor is it unnatural, for what have priests of Rome done for the souls or the bodies of the people? The greater part of them pass by the people, as did the priests and Levites of old the man who had fallen among thieves. Hundreds of the Catholic clergy, it is true, know not and do not take the trouble to know what power they serve, and what interest *they possess*. They speak of the Church and of

the atonement, but they hang upon the dead letter. They know not, or will not know, that the Church should have an eye to the vital interests of society—that man's abode is the earth—that the jarring interests of society need to be reconciled. There should be the spirit of conciliation between the cultivated and the uncultivated, the high and the low, the rich and the poor. And this should pre-eminently be effected by the teachers of the people, not by empty words, but in earnestness and truth. This is their work in this age, and, in this glorious field of labour, the corn is ripe for the harvest. The labourers want no license from Rome, but need only to be consecrated by the Spirit, and to work with honesty and firm conviction. When they shall work in fervour and in truth, the people will recognize their authority without symbols from Rome. But the hierarchy does not wish for such workmen. It desires no true friends and teachers of the people. It does not wish to see society elevated. Hence it is an imperative duty to struggle against such a hypocritical system, and this duty I have sought to discharge.

Lastly, I rise against the tyranny of the *Roman hierarchy*, because its institutions tend

to the division and degradation of my nation.

The Roman Catholic priest is torn from family bonds by celibacy, and bound to the Roman Vicar by principles of blind obedience, by worldly interests, and therefore estranged from the welfare of his country. He, as a teacher of the people, instead of exciting within them patriotism and public spirit, is rather bound by the hierarchical laws to suppress them. History is full of illustrations of bishops and priests betraying the great interests of their country to the Pope. But we need not cite them. The present day furnishes abundant proof of the unremitting labour of the clergy to reduce the German nation to the tyranny of Rome. It is true that hundreds of priests are ignorant of this. But, when it is known, how great the guilt to seek to promote it! Should not every motive urge us to exert ourselves in achieving our country's independence? And this is one great reason why I have sought a reform in the Church, according to the wants of the present time.

And this reform, to my mind, is only to be brought about by synods, in which the laity shall have a voice and a part; and, to further this end, *I resolved, as early as the autumn of 1843, to*

present my views in a pamphlet, and also a description of Roman abuses. This duty seemed the more urgent, in view of the violence and extravagances of the Jesuitical party in Germany at the present time, and especially in Silesia, where Dr. Ritter administered the affairs of the bishopric. Dr. Ritter acted and dispensed entirely at his pleasure; he removed and dismissed in the most arbitrary manner, and without ceremony, all curates and chaplains who were obnoxious to him. Thus, for instance, Mr. Beer, the curate of Brieg, was removed from parishioners most anxious to retain him. The curate, Mr. Schotte, was degraded to a chaplain; and the chaplain, Mr. Weiser, was ordered to do penance in the seminary, without trial or defence; and these men were of spotless reputation. Still Dr. Ritter continued to play the part of Providence in the bishopric, and to send rain on the just and on the unjust. The inferior clergy, who, when opposed to the higher, have few or no rights, were treated with despotic cruelty. At that time, one was reminded of the days of feudal barbarity. In some places, as in Brieg, affairs came actually to violence. But Dr. Ritter had willing tools, and they fulfilled his orders. He, in addition to *other usurpations*, interdicted marriages between

Catholics and Protestants. He commanded the old Silesian ritual to be observed, which had originated in the time of persecution for witchcraft. In the seminary, he ordered the students always to appear in a clerical dress among their fellow-citizens. Fanaticism gradually was kindled among the younger chaplains, and the old curates saw themselves surpassed at once in piety. Numerous rosary and breviary unions were instituted. Mr. Schneeweiss was encouraged to import rosaries from Bavaria, and to perform the most sensual services of an abominable Jesuitism. The people were heavily taxed, to enrich, as it was reported, the Jesuits of Bavaria. The gymnasiasts were compelled to become members of these unions, which were extended in every direction. Collections were everywhere made for convents and nunneries. Dr. Ritter wanted nothing but the episcopal mitre. In this desire, however, he was disappointed: Mr. Knauer, a mild and humane priest, was elected. But he was accused, in consequence of the intrigues of the hierarchical party at Rome, of incapacity, and hence his consecration was delayed for more than a year, during which time disturbances increased in the bishopric. Both clergymen and laymen complained of the intrigues and dissensions; but

neither citizens nor priests felt it a duty to oppose the prevailing confusion and fanaticism. Grieved in view of increasing darkness, irritated by the insolence of the dominant party, and disgusted with its machinations, especially in relation to the bishopric of Breslau, I resolved to expose the scandals, although as yet I had never written anything for the public. And so I wrote the article—"Rome and the Chapter of Breslau,"* and subscribed "A Chaplain."

* This article appeared in No. 135 of the *Vaterland's Blättu*, of the year 1842, and ran thus:—

ROME AND THE CHAPTER OF Breslau.

Within a year, Canon Knauer has been elected by the chapter, bishop of Breslau, but the election has not yet been confirmed at Rome, although, for two years, the diocese has had no bishop, and other bishops, elected at a later period, have long ago been confirmed. To be sure this is not to be wondered at, for Mr. Knauer is a moderate, a humane, and perhaps a liberal man. But it is a matter of surprise that the Chapter of Breslau should thus submit to the insults of Rome, and quietly see its own and Mr. Knauer's honour and reputation injured. The objection is absurd that the pope considered Mr. Knauer unfit for the office. How does he know this? Has not the Chapter, by his election, declared his capacity? Is it to be presumed that such a respectable body would elect an incapable bishop? Why should the Pope put more confidence in miserable calumniators than in a college of respectable men? Why does he put these men in an equivocal light before the diocese, and thus injure their

Well did I know when I wrote that letter that I subscribed my own doom ; yet I did not think that the hierarchy would so openly have trampled on truth and justice as I was soon to learn from

usefulness ? The Chapter has been silent until now. Must this be considered Christian humility ?

* * * * *

But then it may be said, the Pope has the right to confirm or not confirm a bishop. Let us consider this, apart from the principles of reason and justice, in view simply of the historical right. If the Pope has the right to confirm or not to confirm, so also has the Chapter the right to elect a bishop, or to reject one nominated by Rome.

But suppose the Italians, availing themselves of the dissensions of the Chapter itself, and of the distractions which originated in it, should now venture to do what, for a long time, they have not dared ? In almost no other way can the silence of the Chapter, and the boldness of Rome be explained. If this be the case,—if the members of the Chapter have sacrificed the prosperity, the rights, and the liberties of the diocese to their ambition and jealousy, and thence opened the way for the Italians in Germany, should we not call upon the men who are the most influential in the diocese, and from whom we have a right to expect the guardianship of our liberties, to do their duty, lest the charge of disloyalty should fall upon them ?

Shall those times return when, in order to secure the confirmation of a bishop, we must send horses laden with gold to Rome ? It is a notorious fact that, of late, the Italians have presumed to exact money from the Germans. We are required *to pray that the Spaniards should again return to the servitude of the Church.* Who caused the bloody drama now

the conduct of Dr. Ritter, and of the Vicariat's office in Breslau.

In about six weeks after the publication of the article, I was summoned by Dr. Ritter to say, upon my word of honour as a priest, whether I was the author of the aforesaid article, or whether I had any share in composing or inserting it. Yes, Dr. Ritter, administrator of the bishopric, a man of sixty years of age, with grey hairs, dared to call me to account for speaking the truth! He, who but a short time before gave me the injunction to declare the truth, without fear of man, and which, as a priest, I was bound to

acted in their land? Did the people? Did Espartero, and people of that sort? Why any schoolboy in Germany knows that, next to the tyranny of kings, the idle and dissolute clergy, devoted to Rome, were the real authors. Everybody knows that the French Revolution was not caused by Danton, and Robespierre, and Camille Desmoulins, but by the despotism of Louis XIV., the profligacy of Louis XV., and the insolence and extravagance of the high nobility, both secular and religious. We also know that Luther was not the author of the thirty years' war, but that it was caused by the encroachments of Rome, and of the nobles for several preceding centuries. Truly should we pray for the Spaniards, that they may have liberty and light, by which alone true religion and morality will prevail. We should not pray for slavery and dependence, which produce only hypocrisy and Phariseeism.

A CHAPLAIN.

declare, [presumed to call me to account for the same! Is religion a thing to be thus mocked and played with? Should I not tell the truth? And did I not declare it when I said that the thirty years' war in Germany, and the revolutions of France and Spain, were caused by the intrigues and corruption of the Roman priesthood?—and shall I not be permitted to write what I know to be true, and what is related in every schoolboy's manual? I also said that the calumnies and dissensions of the candidates for the bishopric were the probable reasons why the Pope delayed the confirmation of Mr. Knauer. The whole diocese knew these dissensions as well as I; they knew what caused the abdication of the late bishop. Mr. Ledlinitzky was scandalized at the contentions occasioned by clerical ambition, and should not I be allowed to give evidence of so well known a fact? When Dr. Ritter called me to account for speaking the truth, he placed falsehood and hypocrisy on the sacred altar, and bid me worship them.

Dr. Ritter would have had a different answer from me, had I not been influenced by the existing relations between the superior and inferior clergy, and by a regard to the condition *of my brothers and sisters*, who were orphans,

and dependent on me. After mature deliberation and consultation with an experienced friend, I resolved, as I had written the article in the name of my colleagues and fellow-citizens, not to relinquish their rights, and to rely on the laws of my country.

By the Prussian laws, the name of an anonymous writer can only be required by a board of justice, and then only unless an article contains personal insults, or matters dangerous to the welfare of the State. Were it not for this law, an inferior clergyman could never venture to express any sentiment, however true and important, disagreeable to the superior clergy, without being in danger of losing his place. If government acted on the principle of Dr. Ritter and of the Church, then no officer could speak of any abuse without being interrogated by his superiors, and at the risk of losing his office.

Dr. Ritter had no right to question me. He, in so doing, invaded the privileges of the whole lower clergy. Therefore I could not yield to his demands without injury to religion and to my colleagues. Shall the lower clergyman not be permitted to speak the truth without losing his office? Shall he have no protection from his

country? Are the superior clergy alone the infallible expositors of the truth?

In view of my rights, and of my peculiar situation, I simply replied to Dr. Ritter, that my conscience forbade me to answer his questions. But the Roman priesthood are accustomed to turn everything to the worst side. And so it happened in my case. Dr. Ritter would fain have taxed me with cowardice and falsehood, and attempted, by perverting my words, to degrade me in the estimation of my fellow-citizens. But it was all in vain. I have triumphantly refuted the charge, as it was hinted that I wished to save my place by meanness and falsehood; for I voluntarily surrendered it, and encountered privation and poverty, when I might easily have retained it, and escaped the suspension by disavowal and denial.



OBJECTIONS.

It has been urged against me that, although it was all true which I had written, still I had no *right to make the truth known!* But let those

trembling slaves of authority, who insult the truth, know, that I have not only the right so to do, but also that duty compels me. I wrote that article with the feelings of a German who indignantly beheld the encroachments of the Roman hierarchy; who beheld German teachers of the people lending themselves as tools to extend, more and more audaciously, this ecclesiastical tyranny, when they ought to be leading their nation to liberty and independence, without which virtue is scarcely possible. I wrote that article as a teacher of the people whose duty it is to call things by their right names, although injustice may be committed on the very steps of the altar, and of that pontifical throne which has been venerated for one thousand years. Dr. Ritter, too, makes a new distinction in the word honour. He asks me to declare on my clerical word of honour! Is honour to be estimated according to the accidental office which a man holds? Are those people, who have no office without a principle of honour? I know but one kind of honour,—that which God has implanted in the human soul—the honour to be a man. To me this honour is higher than any clerical conceit with which Rome would imbue the minds of *its servants*. The honour and dignity of

manhood should be higher to me than prebends, and bishoprics, and prelateships, and this honour I hope to defend against every one, even against Dr. Ritter. He will, by this, see that I am not bound, as he supposes, to the hierarchal sorceries and tricks which degrade the reason, and enslave the will. No, I have seen the hierarchy under its mask of hypocrisy, I have viewed it in all its hideous deformities, and my dignity as a man, as well as love to my neighbour, demand that I should help to tear away from it the accursed mask.

THE DEVICES OF DR. RITTER.

Dr. Ritter's Jesuitical means of scaring the people had not the wished-for result; he sought, by denunciations against me to attain his end. Some years ago, a clergyman had said to a citizen, that I wore a longer beard, and a shorter coat, than he considered decent. On the strength of this, Dr. Ritter made no delay in exposing me in *one of his hierarchal writings*, to which I replied,

that I was sorry that my outward appearance had given scandal to tender consciences, and I would, therefore, in future avoid the offence (I wore the same dress as at the seminary), and would, moreover, relinquish my situation if he considered me unworthy to hold it.

Notwithstanding this, Dr. Ritter went to the clerical administration of Grotkau, and demanded of Caspar Hoffman an exposure of my conduct. I never was much acquainted with Mr. Hoffman, and permitted him to act his pleasure respecting my pecuniary remuneration, that constant bone of contention between the priests and the chaplains. He allowed me only thirty-two thalers a year, and the town granted sixteen more. Yet he derived a rich income from the duties which I discharged for him. He did evidently wish to see me far away, because we differed in opinion, and because I possessed the good opinion of the congregation, which he was not pleased to see, nor willing to allow. He, in accordance with the request of Dr. Ritter, reported against me, and pretended that he expressed the opinions of all the community, when, subsequently, it appeared that only two persons sided with him.

His accusations are the following :—first, that I wore too long hair, and too short a coat for a

clergyman. I, of course, dismiss this nonsense with contempt, and refer my readers to the testimony of the citizens and authorities of Grotkau. I would observe, that this was only a *pretence* for an accusation the true grounds of which were, my labours in the school and in the church. And this will appear from the following incident :—

In the school of which I had the direction, I taught the scholars German history, and exercised them in composition. I also laid the foundation for a small library, and, in my teachings, did not follow the prescribed catechism, because I perceived that it made religion disgusting to the children, rather than causing it to be planted in their hearts. Beside this I visited the Sunday school, and laboured there also to free it from superstition and hypocrisy. This was not agreeable to Caspar Hoffman, who had arranged a formal system. He knew all my movements, and, one day, came into my school, and, in a loud and authoritative tone, questioned the children. They, in their fright, were not able to answer a word. So he beat the religion of love into them with a cudgel. When I, full of indignation at this unjust chastisement, expostulated with him, *he replied*, that he had serious doubts of my or-

thodoxy ; that I did not teach according to the catechism, and took up their time by teaching German history. To all this he was incited by his superiors. My reply, however, was such that Caspar Hoffman paid no more visits to my school.

Again, he reported that I performed the duties of a clergyman without dignity, and in an unbecoming manner. This accusation, in the sense he meant to imply, is a disgraceful lie. For, although I conceive that many forms were foreign to the true idea of Christian worship, yet I had too much respect for other people's convictions and opinions to scandalize them, as was reported of me. I submitted, therefore, to the prescribed forms, though, to be sure, without hypocritical wincing of the eyes, and distortion of the features. Is God to be honoured by these, and by the unintelligible murmur of Latin prayers ? And is the community to be edified by these ?

Besides, it was impossible for me to court scandal by extraordinary behaviour, while I was consumed with grief, by the feeling that I was a slave, and was contributing to the prevalence of superstition and idolatry. Any one must have *perceived just the opposite of the accusations of*

Caspar Hoffman, as I stood, exhausted with grief, before the altar.

Lastly, he reported that no one would take me for a catholic priest. I confess that I consider this rather an eulogium, for I never wished to be distinguished from my fellow-citizens, and because a clerical dress made me no more and no less a man. Is a stripe on the black stock that which makes a true teacher of the people? Are not lies spoken and acted in spite of that stripe? Do even the golden ornaments of the priest prevent his hypocrisy? Do they not rather promote it?



UNREASONABLE REQUESTS FROM MY BRETHREN.

Besides giving a commission to Caspar Hoffman, Dr. Ritter incited a zealous theologian to persuade me to retract. I also received two letters from a crack-brained clergyman of Meisse, with abundance of exaggerated protestations of *his brotherly love*, in which he tried to persuade *me to become a liar and a hypocrite*. He wished

me to deny generally known facts, and make a mean and cowardly submission to the despotism of Dr. Ritter. If he viewed me as a priest of religion, in the sense Christ taught, he should not have requested me to deny truths which everybody knew, but should have animated me to steadfastness and firmness to declare the same. Were not the intrigues of the candidates for the bishopric known and complained of by both priests and laymen? Yet none dared to complain, for they loved their livings better than they loved truth. Moreover, Schmewess was full of contradictions in his letter, in which he resembled too many of his brethren. I believe, so far as I know Mr. S., that he is a good man, and has a zeal for the welfare of the church. But the words of Gibbon are true: "The spirit of fanaticism, so credulous and yet so cunning, gradually destroys the living principles of truth, when it has once taken root in a noble mind."

THE SEVENTY CHAPLAINS.

About this time, seventy Silesian chaplains inserted a very pathetic letter in the "Zion," in which they begged Dr. Ritter to remove me from my office, and for which he returned due thanks.

I have not answered this letter, because I know that the greater part acted out of fear to Dr. Ritter; but I believe I have discharged my obligation; for while they, in accordance with their promise, prayed for me, I have been labouring for them.



REMOVAL FROM OFFICE.

Dr. Ritter sent me my letter of dismissal, when he despaired of learning from my friends whether or no I had confessed myself the author of the article against him. He also, at the same time, communicated to the whole Silesian clergy my dismissal. He notified the same to the sexton *and sacristan* of the church; so I could not even

visit the church, such was the zeal against me, without running the danger of open disturbance, and of being turned out of doors.



THE TESTIMONY OF THE TOWN OF GROTKAU.

On the very day that my suspension was publicly known, I received, without solicitation, a testimonial respecting the way I had discharged my sacred office, and it was signed wholly by Catholics.* This declaration, and my defence, I sent without delay to the Vicariat's office. After the testimonial was sent, still more citizens were anxious to subscribe, and regretted that their testimony could not be added. From

* The certificate is as follows :—

We, the undersigned, have great pleasure in testifying, that Mr. Chaplain Ronge has always discharged his duties in a becoming manner ;—that never, by his dress, his demeanour, or in any way whatever, whether in the intercourse of common life or in the discharge of his spiritual functions, given just occasion for public scandal.

Moreover, Mr. Ronge, by his modest and affable manners, by his exemplary life, by his constant zeal in the

this declaration of the town of Grotkau, it will be easy to see on what side is the truth. Therefore I abstain from further explanations, and ask only these questions :—

1. Why was I suspended and condemned to dishonourable seclusion ?

2. In what way were the proceedings carried on ?

I was condemned, first, because, according to the claims of my profession, I had reminded the candidates of the bishopric of their duty. And

education of youth, and by his humane conduct, won our general esteem and love, and these he possesses in the fullest measure.

ADAM, Burgomaster and Justice.

FRANZ H. PROSKE, Royal Commissary of Justice.

STEPHEN, Innkeeper.

MULLE, Town Treasurer.

Dr. PRIEUS, Royal Physician of Department.

HERN, Major of Army.

VON DOUAT, Justice.

PECH, Curate.

BITNER, Receiver of Customs.

THAMER, Representative of the Town.

TREUMER, Merchant.

ROTER, „

BITNER, „

LÖGER, Alderman.

(And twenty-five others.)

had I not the right to do it? I was called upon to do it, as a teacher of religion, and, as such, I dare not betray the truth for the sake of preferment or favour. And, again, are the canons of Breslau more infallible than other men? If Dr. Ritter and his colleagues will be the representatives of the Christian religion, then they should have the courage to hear the first principles of that religion, namely, truth and love. Why was I persecuted because I declared the truth? And if I had stated what was not true, why was I not convicted of falsehood? Why did they not condescend to prove it to me? Am I, as a chaplain, too inferior a person? Do not they pretend to teach one Christian equality? Do not I stand on a footing with them by clerical ordination? If they do not understand the words of the Gospel which teach this equality, then I will show it unto them, and will not cease to remind the suppressed clergy of their rights, and to rouse them from their slavery, for I know what they suffer; how their hearts are bleeding, for I suffered with them.

Secondly, I was deposed, because I caused scandal by my dress and the cut of my hair, and because I offended decency and dignity in the *discharge of my clerical functions*.

44 TESTIMONY OF THE TOWN OF GROTKAU.

These accusations, I trust, were sufficiently refuted by the testimonial from Grotkau. But if they had any foundation, my faults are to be shared with no small part of the right reverend servants of the Pope who are permitted to remain in office. But I must ask, why did they not accuse me of drunkenness, of levity, of carelessness in my vocation, and other peccadilloes? They would have done so, had any reports unfavourable to my character reached their ears.

2. And how did they proceed against me? I was suspended without trial, and without proof, and sentenced to an ignominious seclusion, while no German or Prussian citizen can be deprived of a civil office, except by the supreme executive power, without a regular trial. The Apostle Paul claimed the rights of a Roman citizen, but the Romish church refuse the most ordinary rights of a citizen.

REASONS WHY I DID NOT SUBMIT TO THE RIGHT REVEREND VICARIAL OFFICE.

I did not submit to this vicarial court, which sets forth arbitrary principles, and which is founded neither on the laws of the land, nor on canonical laws, for the following reasons:—I should have done violence to my moral dignity, have disregarded the honour of my nation, and the rights of the whole inferior clergy.

1. My moral dignity would have been lessened. As a man, I am bound to oppose every influence which would be injurious to my personal freedom and rights, and would rather wander in poverty and rags than boast in the rich livery of an ecclesiastical slave. But, as a teacher of the people, I have still higher obligations. I am bound to give witness to the truth with independence and boldness. And I must, in order to be successful, have an unspotted reputation. But the vicarial court would deprive me both of my freedom and my honour.

2. Again, as a citizen of a civilized state, where law, and not arbitrary command rules, I should have injured its honour, if, in the centre of it, I *had yielded myself, tamely and cowardly, to*

merely arbitrary sentences, and that imposed by foreign power, or the power which is connected with it.

3. Lastly, it being the duty, as well as the right of a religious teacher, to declare the truth without respect of persons, I should have betrayed the privileges of the whole inferior clergy, by servilely yielding to a power which would hinder me from discharging this obligation. The lower clergy have suffered themselves to be deprived of this and other rights by their superiors, and have become their blind slaves. But this cowardice and meanness, both in past and present times, cannot exempt me from discharging my duties, and cannot rob me of my rights. And these I demand the more earnestly, as I perceive the moral and physical misery among the people which is produced by ecclesiastical domination. Does the priest cease to be a citizen ?

MY DEFENCE.

After I received the decree for my suspension, I *took the lawful way*, if such a term may be used,

and sent my defence, with the testimony of the town of Grotkau, to the vicarial court. My mind was so excited by the calumnies which had been circulated about me, that I was unfitted to compose a calm defence. I have much pleasure in stating that a Catholic lawyer nobly offered his services to conduct the defence, and took all necessary steps. To him I did not conceal my determination to relinquish my office, if they persisted in continuing their disgraceful persecution.

MY DEPARTURE FROM GROTKAU.

Soon after I received my letter of suspension, I discontinued my clerical functions, and yet remained a few days in Grotkau, in order to take the proper steps for my vindication from the calumnies of Caspar Hoffman, and the apothecary Ebel. These two had made their ridiculous accusation under cover of religion. The rest of the inhabitants of the town of Grotkau have treated me kindly, and the opposing testimonies which have been brought against me are only to

be explained by the influence of the chapter. Different reports were naturally circulated, for only a few knew the real reasons of my suspension. But I must be silent. I will let pass every judgment concerning me, although some remarks from pretended friends have deeply pained me. However, it would be unreasonable to expect from them a full and perfect understanding of the circumstances. To be sure, nobody knew how much the disgraceful slavery of Rome oppressed me, and how much I was shocked to see my nation reduced to dependence, and shackled by the artful priests of Rome, and their German assistants. To me it was a matter of rejoicing and pride, to bear unjust reproaches for the sake of my fellow-citizens, even for those who persecuted me, as they believed, for the honour of the Church. In my mind there still continued the confidence that the day of light and deliverance from Rome would come, and when my conduct and my motives would be appreciated. And these views I expressed to the inhabitants of Grotkau, and secured their insertion in a weekly newspaper. From Grotkau I went to my friends—the Count von Reichenbach, in Vultorf, near Neisse, who kindly offered me *his house as a refuge*. Although I had refused a

comfortable independence which the office of a Catholic priest secures, and did not know how long I should be a wanderer, yet the feeling, at last, of freedom from the yoke of Rome, which I had worn for three years, was indescribable. Trusting to the justice of my cause, and to the power of youth, it seemed to me that I had come from a dark and frightful dungeon to the beautiful light of heaven. A new courage animated me. A new and beautiful world bloomed before me. Now I would work and live as a free teacher of the people, and a true priest of the German nation.



MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS.

Nothing galled me more bitterly, and filled me with more sadness than the mortification which my brothers and sisters had to suffer from the many bad reports respecting me. Being simple country people, brought up in Catholicism, young and inexperienced, they could not appreciate the reasons which induced me to relinquish my situation. And although they had unbounded faith

in me, this faith was weakened when they saw themselves disappointed of their just claims to future support. They entreated me, repeatedly, to re-enter upon the duties of my office, because they suffered so much by calumnation. These things caused me my bitterest hours.

THE REPLY OF THE VICARIATE OFFICE.

About three weeks after I sent my defence, and the testimonials of the authorities of Grotkau, to the vicariate office, I received an answer. In this answer, the officers of the court noticed the testimonies only in reference to the false accusation of Caspar Hoffman. These worthy representatives of Christian charity and love, did not condescend to give any satisfaction to me, or to my relations, for the mortifications which they had caused. Even if they felt that this satisfaction was not due to me, they ought to have respected the voice of a whole town. But, in this, one sees another great evil in the tyranny of the hierarchy. While all manliness and dignity *are crushed* among the inferior clergy by the

higher, when in opposition to them, so the lower clergy hold the parishes in bondage to them, and keep the people in stupidity and ignorance. Neither the inferior clergy, nor their congregations are always able to maintain their rights. This inability, for the most part, is now understood to arise from stupidity and sensualism; but this evil, excited by the state of society in former times, ought no longer, in this age, to be endured.

After the answer of the vicarial court, I still, honourably, could have remained in my office a short time; but, then, with what countenance could I have stood before my fellow-citizens, and have spoken to them of the dignity of man, when I myself was a coward and a slave, and frightened about a morsel of bread which was allotted to me by the Roman priest, and when I allowed my religious convictions to be trodden under foot. The resolution became firm in me,—to die a hungry death rather than dishonour myself, and do injury to the rights of my fellow-citizens and companions in office. But to leave no way untried which might confirm my rights and privileges, I wrote to the vicarial office that I would appeal, on this subject, to the new bishop.

AUDIENCE OF THE BISHOP.

The election of Bishop Knauer was at length confirmed, and in April, 1843, he intended to enter Breslau. I travelled to the same city, partly in order to press my own affairs, and partly in order to look to the means of my future subsistence. After the arrival of the Lord Bishop Knauer, I went to one of the cathedral clergymen, who is under sentence of deposition, in order to ascertain what time I could speak with the bishop. In the conference, the reverend prelate said, with great naïveté, I should have said, "No, I have not written the article in question, I know nothing about it," if I wished to keep my place. But he added, "that he had not read the censured article, but that there were terrible things in it."

What shall now the younger clergy say to this expression — "ecclesiastical profession?" And what shall be thought of the independence and justice of an ecclesiastical board of justice, the members of which do not even know the things of which they condemn people? Justice! Yes, indeed, how shall I ask justice of those who are *both accusers and judges*?

I found Bishop Knauer, when I told him my grievances, quite different from the rest of the Catholic clergy. He received me as an old man who knew how to gain the confidence of youth. There was no trace of that mingled humility and pride, hauteur and condescension, which characterize most of his brother prelates ; when I related my affairs to him, he answered, " that he was acquainted with them all, and that they were settled ; that all I had to do was to entreat Dr. Ritter to recall the suspension." I replied that, being of a vehement temper, I was, under present circumstances, but little fit to negotiate with Dr. Ritter. Then he offered himself to speak with that gentleman, and asked me if I was the author of the article. I replied in the affirmative. " Why, then," continued he, " have you exposed yourself to the prosecution of your antagonist ?" " Because," said I, " it was my duty to express the general demands of the citizens and of the inferior clergy, and because no other clergyman seemed to be fitted for the task." After this, he was silent, but objected to my acceptance of the offered tutorship, because, he said, he wanted me in the diocese. He then ordered me to appear again in the afternoon.

When, at the appointed time, I again waited

on the bishop, he appeared somewhat perplexed and reserved, in consequence, as it appeared, of his conversation with Dr. Ritter, who had spoken in a disparaging way respecting me, and pretended that I had been summoned and had not appeared. Now this is false. A condemnation is not a summons. I did not show that Dr. Ritter had reported a falsehood. But Bishop Knauer, a man of eighty years of age, found it inconvenient to have dissensions with the clergy of the chapter, and thus excused himself—"that he was not yet fully installed in office, and could not therefore act as a competent judge"—(it was the day before his consecration). I made no other reply than in the expression of my countenance, and retired, and went to my new place of destination, where I taught the children of the officers of the place.

LAURAHÜTTE.

Laurahütte, near Beuthen, is in Upper Silesia, distant half a mile* from the Russian boundaries.

* *A German mile is about four and a half English miles.*

It is the largest mining village in Upper Silesia, and was first built in 1839. It may easily be imagined that my spirits were exhausted by my past struggles, since I was obliged to break off from my whole past life. Many of my Catholic friends had deserted me, or had acted meanly towards me. The greater number of my Catholic fellow-citizens, also, did not as yet feel the oppression of the Romish yoke. The time of deliverance had not yet come.

My confidence had been strongly shaken by all these things; still, my pupils clung fast to me, and I at times felt like entreating them not to act in an uncharitable way, as others had done. Fear crept upon me, when I lost sight of them, even for half a day. I would make a heaven, through love, in their hearts; and certainly the happiest hours of my life were passed in the school-room, in the atmosphere of pure youthful hearts. By degrees, my mind recovered itself, and became strengthened; which the kind attentions of my friends greatly contributed. Out of school hours I laboured in the duties which pertained to my calling, and much work was completed before the day came for my separation from the hierarchy. I already looked forward to this day, and with greater impatience the

nearer it came, and also with greater confidence. At length the day appeared—the first of October, 1844. From the moment that I saw my article in print (for I trembled for fear it would be rejected), I felt that the spring of light and liberty had commenced in my father land.

THE TREVES LETTER.

An occasion for separation from Rome was presented by the infatuation of the blind servants of the hierarchy itself, at the very time they carried their mockery of true religion, and tried the patience of the German nation to their utmost limits.

A coat, which these priests of Baal cannot say with certainty is the coat of Christ, have they made an object of public reverence, and in order to satisfy their excessive longings for gain. Nor are they content with permitting the credulous community merely to honour it, but they suffer them to address it in these words, "Holy coat, pray for us — holy coat, before thee I bow!" Surely, words are inadequate to express my *indignation* in view of such a reproach cast upon reli-

gion, and such a mockery of human reason! The language I have used to Bishop Arnoldi is said to be far too vehement, but, if measured by the iniquity which called it forth, it may be said to be even filial and reverential.

[Here follows the letter, inserted in the original as a note.—TRANS.]

“THE JUDGMENT OF A CATHOLIC PRIEST RESPECT-
ING THE HOLY COAT OF TREVES.

“*Laurahütte, 1st October.*

“That report which, for a time, we considered only as a fable, namely, that Bishop Arnoldi, of Treves, had exhibited an article of clothing, called the coat of Christ, for religious adoration, you, Christians of the 19th century,—you Germans,—you teachers of religion and of the German people,—at length know is no fable, but a most veritable fact. According to the last accounts, five hundred thousand persons have travelled to see this relic, and thousands more are proceeding thither, since it has been announced that it cures diseases, and works miracles. The intelligence of these facts is spreading through all nations, and the clergy of France have maintained “that they possess the true coat, and that the one at Treves is spurious.” Certainly, in reference to this thing,

we can apply the words, he who, in some things, will not lose his understanding, has no understanding to lose." Five hundred thousand men—five hundred thousand intelligent Germans—have gone to Treves either to see or worship the relic! The greater number of these multitudes are from the lower classes, and, besides, are in great poverty—are oppressed, ignorant, and superstitious, and, for the most part, degraded. They leave the cultivation of their fields, they abandon their business, the care of their households, and the education of their children in order to make a pilgrimage to Treves—to be present at a feast of idols—a disgraceful show which the Roman hierarchy has permitted to be exhibited. Yes, it is an idol feast, inasmuch as many thousands of the credulous multitudes are misled, and bestow those feelings and that reverence which they owe to God alone upon a worthless garment which human hands have made. And what evil consequences result from their pilgrimage? Thousands of persons deprive themselves of all their money in order to meet the expenses of the journey, and make offerings to the holy coat—that is, to the priests. They raise it with the greatest sacrifices, or else *obtain it by beggary*; and upon their return, they

are driven to hunger and distress, or fall ill from the excess of their fatigue. Are the external evils great?—so are the moral evils greater. Many, reduced to distress, seek to indemnify themselves by unlawful means. Many women lose their purity of mind, their honour, and their good name, and thus destroy the peace and happiness of their families.

“In short, this unchristian exhibition has opened the door to superstition, to fanaticism, and to vice. Nor would the results be different in the community, whether the coat in question be spurious or genuine.

“And the man who has exhibited this article of clothing—this work of human device,—exhibited, too, for public devotion—who has given this false direction to the religious feelings of the credulous and suffering people—who has added iniquity to superstition—who has extorted from the hungry and the miserable, money to swell his coffers—who has subjected the German nation to the ridicule and reproach of all other nations, and who has drawn nearer over our heads those stormy clouds which at all times impend heavily and gloomily—this man is a bishop, a German bishop, Bishop Arnoldi, of Treves.

“*Bishop Arnoldi, of Treves, I turn to you, and*

demand from you, by my authority as a German teacher and a Catholic priest,—yea, in the name of Christianity, in the name of the German nation, I conjure you—to put a stop to this abominable exhibition, and withdraw the coat in question from the public gaze, that it may give no further reproach. Do you not know,—as bishop, you must know,—that the founder of the Christian religion left to his disciples and followers, not his coat, but his spirit? His coat, Bishop Arnoldi, belongs to his executioners. Do you not know,—as bishop, you must know,—that Christ taught that God is a spirit, and they who worship *Him* must worship Him in *spirit* and in *truth*? And he can be worshipped everywhere, not merely at Jerusalem, in the temple, not merely on Mount Gerizim, or at Treves with its holy coat. Do you not know,—as bishop, you must know,—that the New Testament expressly forbids the worship of any image, or of any relic; that the Christians of the apostolic time, and of the three succeeding centuries, permitted not an image or relic in their churches (and they could have had them in abundance)? Do you not know that the worship of images and relics is idolatrous, and that the fathers of the first three centuries ridiculed the *heathen* in consequence?

“In short, do you not know,—as bishop, you must know,—that it was not till the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries that the vigorous and healthy spirit of the Germans was humbled to the worship of images, introduced by the crusades, when the high spiritual idea of the Godhead was obscured by the introduction of Eastern fables? You see, Bishop Arnoldi, of Treves,—you know better than I can express to you, the effects which the idolatrous reverence for relics brought upon us, namely—the spiritual and external bondage of Germany; and yet you scruple not to expose your relics for public veneration! Now, if perchance you do not know these things, and if you seek to promote a pure Christianity by exhibiting this relic, remember you are loading your conscience with a double burden, from which you cannot free yourself. First, you commit an unpardonable offence in withholding from suffering humanity, till the year 1844, a garment which has the power of healing diseases; and secondly, because you have taken offerings of money from deluded pilgrims who have thronged your city. Is it not unpardonable to take money from the starving people? You have seen how distress, for weeks past, was driving hundreds to despair and to death. Deceive not yourself,

because hundreds of thousands are the victims of your avarice and your acts; for while these are filled with mistaken zeal, millions of others, like myself, are inflamed with indignation at your disgraceful exhibition. This feeling is not confined to one class merely, or to a particular party, but exists in every class, yea, among Catholic priests themselves: their condemnation has come before it was expected. Already the historian has handed you over to the contempt of your contemporaries, and posterity points you out as the Tetzels of the age.

“But you, my German fellow-citizens, whether you dwell near to, or at a distance from Treves, exert yourselves to prevent such a scandal from ever again disgracing the German name. You have city institutions, managers of parishes, orders of men at home and abroad; well, work through these. Let one and all resolve to put an end to the despotism of the Roman hierarchy; for it is not merely at Treves that the modern traffic in indulgence exists, but that in the east and west, in the north and south, money for rosaries, masses, indulgences, and burials, are continually exacted, and that spiritual darkness overshadows the land.

“Let us all co-operate in this work, whether

we be Catholics or Protestants, for our honour, our freedom, and our happiness depend upon it. Disturb not the manes of your fathers, who, while they destroyed the capital, permitted the **Engelsburg** to remain in Germany. Do not insult the memory of a Huss, a Hutten, or a Luther. Express your minds, and prepare yourselves for action.

“In conclusion, let me say to my brethren in the ministry,—those who wish and seek the welfare of your congregations, the honour and freedom of your country, keep silence no longer. You disgrace your religion, your country, and your profession if you continue silent, and forbear to act according to your convictions. I intend to write to you again; therefore, for the present, I have no more to add. Show yourselves to be the true disciples of Him who offered up all for the truth, light, and liberty. Show that *you* have not inherited his *coat*, but his *spirit*.

“JOHANNES RONGE,


“*Catholic Priest.*”

[Here follows, in the original, a letter from the Bishop of Breslau to Johannes Ronge, demanding whether he had written the above letter, and threatening the highest censure of the Church in

case he cannot give sufficient explanation and satisfaction. To this Ronge replied in the following letter.—TRANS.]

“TO THE RIGHT REV. BISHOP, AND KAPITULAR
VICAR OF BISTHUMS.

“On the 18th and 19th of this month I received two letters, the one addressed to me, as ‘Catholic priest,’ the other to me, as the ‘Late Chaplain Ronge,’ in which I am called upon to defend myself, on several points, within fourteen days. I comply with the demand in the following manner. * * * * In relation to my letter about the holy coat, I have to say that I have fully and plainly affixed my name. The letter is no forgery. I have spoken the whole truth, and shall continue to speak it, without fear of man. I shall expose iniquity, even though it is concealed behind altars that have stood a thousand years. I have only done my duty in giving expression to the indignation which the greater part of my countrymen felt in common with myself, in view of the holy coat. Indeed, one should be greatly astonished that a high spiritual authority should seek to defend so obvious an abomination. Can this evil be excused because a bishop was the author of it?



What would have been said if the inferior clergy or other Christians had sought to gain fifty thousand thalers by that exhibition? Have the Apostles—has Christ—encouraged such things by their example? Christ fed, and not extorted money from, the hungry multitude who came to him; and was moved with indignation when he told them in the temple that his house was for prayer, and not for merchandise.

“I have spoken the truth, and, therefore, shall not recant. I have the firm conviction that the sublime author of our religion numbers me among his disciples, and I live in the belief that my fellow-citizens and Christians will not exclude me from their communion. Millions of men have read and received my statements with joy, because they believed they came from a honest heart. On this account I have obtained the love of the millions. I am not deceived in this love, which will not be withdrawn in consequence of your reproach or persecution.

“I can reply in no other way.

“JOHANNES RONGE.”

November 30th, 1844.

THE BISHOP'S REPLY.

“ In consequence of your answer of the 30th of Nov., in which you acknowledge yourself the author of the article ‘ On the Holy Coat of Treves,’ and will make no recantation, I am compelled, in virtue of the power vested in me, to pronounce upon you the sentence of degradation and excommunication, because your article contains points which render you liable to ecclesiastical censure,

“ And, in conformity with the laws, I require from you to return the documents which you received at your ordination.

“ As you have not obeyed my injunction to appear before me, and have thus deprived me of the opportunity to eradicate your erroneous and anti-church opinions in general, and especially those concerning the veneration of relics, the honouring of the holy coat, and others, by fatherly explanation and friendly persuasion, I have only to pronounce sentence against you, which I do with the greatest pain, and to add my earnest desire that the grace of God may lead you to a right knowledge of the Catholic *faith*, and that you may at length understand *that the use of relics by the Church is very*

different from the abuse of them, which alone is proper for you to discuss.

“ LATUSSEK.”

Breslau, December, 1844.

CONCLUSION.

I have now presented to my nation a sketch of my life, and of my differences. I have proved, by written testimonies, that I have been removed from my situation, and sentenced to disgraceful punishment by the vicariat's office at Breslau, without a citation, hearing, or defence, on account of my article, “ Rome and the Chapter of Breslau.” No criminal in civil courts would have been treated so unjustly. I have also proved that I have been excommunicated by the same office, on account of the letter of Treves, and excluded from the communion of the church. As, however, I spoke and acted as my calling, as the Gospel, and as my duty required, and for so doing have been subjected to a cruel and unjust sentence by the Roman hierarchy, I am com-

pelled to present myself to my nation, and accuse this hierarchy of injustice and cruelty, and demand from it the revocation of my sentence. But it is not on my own account that I make my accusation, but for the sake of the whole inferior clergy, who are deprived of law when in opposition to the higher clergy. I make this for the sake of communities who are equally without redress when they contest with the priesthood. I make my accusation in the name of Christianity itself, and maintain that the Roman hierarchy, which calls itself *the Church*, does not fulfil its proper calling, even that of promoting peace among men.

The Romish Church has made the doctrines of the gospel a system of hypocrisy, compulsion, and extortion. She has prostituted religion, and reduced it to revolting Jesuitism. She seeks not to promote union among mankind, but rather to enflame animosities between nations, to kindle the flame of domestic strife, and to humiliate humanity by vice and hypocrisy.

It is she who has fixed a great gulf between the different orders of society, between the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the educated and the ignorant. She it is who daily widens *this gulf* by the imposture of the priesthood.

To escape final destruction all nations should arise with energy and united effort to avert the threatened ruin. All nations, and especially the Germans, are under this obligation. They should convene a synod, composed of persons elected by the people, from the clergy, and from the laity, in order to devise means to escape from the spiritual despotism of Rome, to purify religion, and to lead the Church to its true calling—the calling which the wants of our nation, and the spirit of the present age demand, even that of reconciling together the high and low, the rich and the poor, the learned and the ignorant, and of securing liberty and love among all the nations of the earth. If we are at peace with our fellow-creatures we are reconciled with God; for St. John says, “whoso says he loveth God, and hates his brother, is a liar.” Arise, therefore, ye men of Germany, of France, of Great Britain, of Italy, of Spain. Arise, men of Europe and of America, let us be united in our work, and let us go manfully to that work, which is to promote universal peace and freedom. The time has come. Let us break the yoke of dogmas, break the sway of hypocritical priests. Let us destroy the Jesuitism which scourges

every good institution, human and divine, and let us introduce the reign of truth, of light, of justice, of virtue, of liberty, and of love—the true predicted reign of Christ on earth.

JOHANNES RONGE.

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